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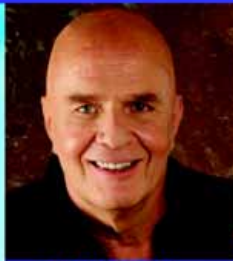
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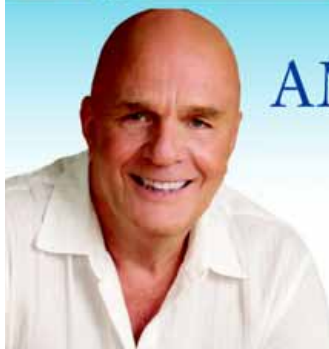


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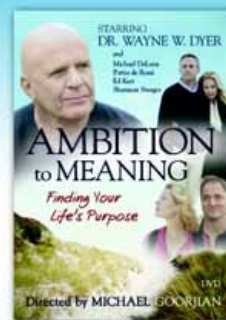


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Publisher - Clyde Chafer

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WORDS FROM THE PUBLISHER.....

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." In the serenity prayer, repeated by millions of people every day, we ask for courage. Summoning up that prayer can be a scary act all by itself. It means we are affirming that we are willing to do what it takes to change a facet of our lives that we may not be comfortable with.

There is an old saying — "Be careful what you wish (pray) for." Prayer to me is the first step in acknowledging that we wish to create a new perception of what our life is about. This doesn't necessarily mean it will be easy. It means we are willing to walk through the fire rather than around it.

Courage means being willing to step out of a cocoon of safety and live on the edge. It means we face our fears and demons. It's about taking a risk and living dangerously. It's an understanding that fear is just a warning sign that something in our life needs to be changed. It's kind of like a wake up call or an alarm going off.

Too often we wish to embrace ignorance or just hit the snooze button. Perhaps courage can be looked at as similar to the energy we use to get out of bed. Face the day rather than hide from it. Living with courage assures us of excitement, challenges and experiences that will separate us from a mundane existence. It allows us to realize a life of potential rather than a life of defeat. Courage is simply the action it takes to realize the joy of a knowing that our heart transmits from our soul with each beat. May we each find the courage to change that which we can.

—Namaste' Clyde

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On The Cover

Natalie Lorber - Yoga teacher and owner of Harmony Yoga Studio, Willoughby, Ohio

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Our Theme for the Next Issue...

Courage

CONTRIBUTORS



Denise Piersante

So what have you done to test your courage? First-time contributor Denise Piersante jumped out of an airplane, with a parachute, of course. She tested herself many times with different physical activities, but one of her greatest challenges, that produced volumes of dread and that required more than a dose of courage, may surprise you. Fear and courage affect each of us in different ways, Piersante says.



Kelley Bell

How much courage do you think it would take to get back up after a martial arts black-belt known as “Conan the Barbarian” sent you flying across a soccer field? Kelley Bell, another first-time writer for the Journey, says the powerful kicks only toughened her resolve. As a woman, she was often shunned as she learned Bando. She left the martial arts practice for awhile, but strange and synchronistic events drew her back. And wisdom she gained from an old grandmaster and mentor from Burma opened her eyes to the true meaning of courage.



Maggie Hardin

Maggie Hardin tells us she likes to throw love bombs out to stressed-filled drivers. Real courage comes in the form of finding love for yourself and for others, she says. Part of doing that involves testing your self, says Hardin, who is also a first-time contributor. She and several co-workers tested the depth of their judgmental attitudes with an obnoxious buzzer. The results were surprising and insightful.

Editor's Note

A real-life model for courage

The magazine's theme this month is courage. It's been said that courage takes many forms, a position clearly understood by the essayists within these pages. Engaging courage can require one to reach deep within for the strength needed to press ahead, or in some cases, simply to carry on.

Natalie Lorenzo-Lorber hasn't spent much time analyzing courage, but as you will read in the first story, she is surely living it. Natalie has been on what some might euphemistically refer to as a bumpy ride for the last five years. Everyone faces difficulties from time to time. Natalie sets an example worth following. It isn't what happens to you that matters, it's how you deal with it.

Despite receiving earth-shattering news that she may someday end up blind and paralyzed, Natalie found the strength — a.k.a. courage — to not only carry on, but to make wholesale and risky changes in her life that would give one pause even under normal conditions.

No one knows their future. For Natalie, that future is even more unpredictable. That's exactly why her story is one to remember when you think things are not going so well in your life. It's a treasure of inspiration and a living example of courage in action.

— TC Brown

TAKING THE HARD ROAD TO COURAGE

By TC Brown

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not absence of fear. – Mark Twain

Courage takes many forms. – Howard Cosell

The strange and abnormal symptoms began to strike Natalie Lorenzo-Lorber three years ago when she was in her late 20s.

Numbness spread throughout her body followed later by stabbing pains. Suddenly and unexpectedly, she struggled to remember names, places and situations. When the symptoms persisted, Natalie went to the Cleveland Clinic in January 2006, where physicians puzzled over her difficulties.

For months they submitted her to batteries of tests, including MRIs and spinal taps, among other evaluations. Finally, they called her in to deliver the stunning diagnosis.

Lesions found on her brain pointed to Multiple Sclerosis, a chronic and often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous system. Symptoms can be nonexistent to mild, or they can charge off in an entirely different and more problematic direction, resulting in paralysis and blindness.

“At first it was a big, huge shock, but it wasn’t that bad because I didn’t know what it was,” Natalie recalls of that life-changing day. “I had no idea about MS, except I knew for a lot of folks it was depressing and they ended up in wheel chairs. It seemed not really real.”

The reality sank in soon enough, upending Natalie’s world and that of her new husband Matt, enveloping them in a cocoon of dread. Even now, recalling those early days, and how “really bad” it was, emotion and tears wash over her.

But Natalie refused to succumb to fear, remain immobilized or wallow in self pity. After an initial period of shock, Natalie took the proverbial bull by the horns, made some tough, forward-looking decisions, and moved on. Her story is a tale of a person who gets up off the canvas, seizes courage and plunges back into life in the face of a frightening and unknown future.

Headstands in the Hospital

Natalie grew up in Willoughby but eventually moved to Colorado, where she lived for nearly six years and where she was first exposed to Yoga. At the time, she casually practiced the discipline as a way to work out, or for entertainment or as just “something to do.”

In 2003, her family called with some very bad news. Her father Ron had been diagnosed with mantle cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma, an aggressive form of cancer. With no hesitation, she packed her belongings and moved back to Cleveland to assist in any way possible.

“It was like a wake up call,” Natalie says. “Being far away, we usually talked a lot anyway and when I heard this, I made an immediate decision to come home.”

Natalie consulted with the doctors as they ordered six months of chemotherapy for her dad. She did something for herself, too. She began practicing Yoga in earnest, at least

an hour a day, and that became no small part of her father’s treatment regimen.

“It intrigued him. He didn’t know what Yoga was,” Natalie says. “He noticed a difference in my personality and my reactions and he told his friends about it.”

Igniting her dad’s intrigue, and raising more than a few nurses’ eyebrows, were the headstand demonstrations that Natalie performed in her father’s hospital room. But Yoga proved to be a powerful tool for her, too.

“It helped me emotionally,” she remembers. “I would cry in practice or let my emotions out in practice and that made me a stronger person going to the hospital or in telling my dad to be strong.”

“He saw that I was opening up,” Natalie says. “Normally you are so sad and devastated and down as a cancer patient or a family member. But he saw the Yoga practice helped me come there and be comfortable and strong and supportive with him.”

Her father’s cancer went into, and remains, in remission. His hair grew back and he proudly escorted his daughter down the aisle when she got married in November 2005. That momentous day did not interfere with Natalie’s well-established habit.

“I went to Yoga practice on my wedding day,” Natalie says. “It calmed me.”

A Living Testimony

The excitement of the new marriage was soon interrupted. Just two months after exchanging wedding vows, strange symptoms began to appear and grow worse. By March 2006, doctors diagnosed her with MS.

Physicians prescribed medication, including a requirement for Natalie to inject herself each week with a drug that might prevent attacks. Those injections produced ongoing flu-like symptoms that came and went.

“A lot of people don’t stay on them,” Natalie says. “You get achy and tired and the big thing is that everything hurts.”

It was difficult for Matt, too. He was reluctant to talk about their situation.

“I pushed it into the back of my mind,” Matt says. “It was not something I wanted to remind her of.”

Then the couple received an e-mail from a family friend whose wife suffered from severe MS symptoms, Matt says.

“I broke down,” Matt remembers. “Hearing from a husband about what his wife was going through crushed me. But Natalie just kept going on living life.”

Natalie understood her husband’s concern.

“He didn’t want to talk about it because he didn’t want to upset me,” Natalie says. “He was really scared and we both wondered if we could or should have kids. It would be a lot on him if something happened to me.”

One of the difficulties with MS is the unknown factor. No one can predict when or if the body of a person with MS will begin to deteriorate.

"My worst fear is that I will end up in a wheelchair, paralyzed," Natalie says.

But she wasn't going to wait around and let things run their course. Hearing that both diet and Yoga were beneficial for MS patients, Natalie took up practice in earnest.

Several Yoga teachers suggested she become an instructor. Despite the uncertainty of the future, Natalie enrolled in T.R.Y. 4 Life Yoga Center and in June 2007 earned her certificate. <http://www.try4life.com>.

Jan Hauenstein, director of the center, was impressed with Natalie's work ethic and devotion to Yoga. Her enthusiastic demonstration of postures was near perfect, she did poses other students had difficulty mustering and she never missed a class.

The admiration for Natalie grew once people learned of the challenges she faced.

"She could have chosen an easy path and stayed home and felt sorry for herself, yet she took action," Jan says. "That takes a lot of strength and it was very courageous. She is a living testimony for others."

Well meaning family and friends reminded Natalie of the potential trials ahead, but she pressed on, building a studio in Willoughby with the help of her husband, brother and father. Harmony Studios opened in January. <http://www.harmonyyogastudios.com/>

"It was a huge decision," says Natalie, who for awhile continued to work a 40-hour a week job. "It was very scary and risky."

Natalie has since quit her day job and now focuses her attention on the studio, which has 13 instructors.

"My whole goal is to make it a warm and comfortable setting for everybody," Natalie says.

Natalie heaps much credit on Yoga for helping her accept and enrich all aspects of her life.

"The whole courage thing I found through Yoga practice," Natalie says. "I would not have been that strong at all. Coming home and finding that Yoga practice helped me to find courage."

Husband Matt agrees.

"She is absolutely determined in everything she does," Matt says. "She will not let this disease come between her and what she want to do in life."

Natalie proved her husband's observation, and her own determination, on November 26 when she gave birth to a seven-pound boy, Mario Lorenzo Lorber.



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Tackling A Fearful Challenge Ignites Courage

By Denise Piersante

My father always said people felt fear when they did something requiring courage; that if you did not have misgivings in courageous situations you were just crazy or not capable of feeling fear. His point was that a courageous person felt anxiety, but acted anyway, in spite of trepidation. He is a World War II combat veteran and was part of the D-Day invasion force at Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge. He earned a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. Regardless of your view of war, and I am a pacifist, there is no doubt he has first-hand knowledge of courage.

Because of his wisdom, fear and courage connect in my mind. I believe feeling fear while doing something that is scary shows some measure of determination.

Even writing this column involved facing fear, but that made the chore even more attractive.

I believe courage is in the eye of the beholder. An action that may produce fear and take pluck for one person may be relatively easy for another. That does not mean the fear-filled person has no courage.

I was not athletic as a kid and I did not see my body as strong or particularly reliable. As an adult, I wanted to change some personal expectations, fears and beliefs about my frame. I wanted to change my relationship with my body. To do this I chose physical challenges that produced fear, although they were challenges I felt were *basically* safe – white water rafting and sky diving.

I took a skydiving preparation class before my first jump. The class took most of the day and we were to skydive after the lessons. Fear stalked me all day long. The closer I got to my jump, the more intense my fear.

My first jump was a static-line jump; the parachute opens automatically when you exit the plane. Not much can go wrong. You are required to make several static-line jumps before you are allowed to open the parachute on your own. They want to be sure you will not freak out, freeze or forget everything you learned. I was thankful for that particular rule because I had no idea how I would react.

In the small Cessna plane in preparation for the jump I realized I had been feeling fear in my chest area all day. As we got closer, the anxiety had expanded to the entire core of my body and I broke out in a clammy sweat. “Why am I doing this,” I thought. Maybe it would be better to have a poor relationship with my body. I wanted to learn to face my fears and develop courage. Then again, maybe this wasn’t such a hot idea. I thought, “Maybe in my next life I can face fears and develop courage. After all, millions of

people live with fear, maybe it’s a worthwhile endeavor.”

Somehow, I got out of that plane. Once on the ground, my first jump completed, I felt so glad to be alive! My knees were wobbly and it was hard to walk, but I was thrilled I had accomplished it!

For the first time in my life, feelings of intense fear, adrenaline and endorphins rushed through me. The greater the fear, the more adrenaline your body produces. The adrenaline boost floods your body with endorphins. We all know about endorphins. The euphoria I felt, facing my angst and displaying courage were now connected.

Those feelings washed away every fear I had ever felt. Those sensations only lasted about a week; it was a glorious week. I jumped again and participated in other physical fearful and adrenaline-producing activities for a period of time.

When I stopped feeling the benefits in a strong way, I quit. I no longer felt the need to face body fears and display body courage. I had achieved what I wanted. I had a new relationship with my body. I saw it as strong and reliable and I enjoyed many physical activities. I was converted to facing my distress.

Youthful Spunk Provides a Lesson

A few years ago, I did another less physical but courageous act. It was a “courage in the eye of the beholder” thing. It was courageous for me, but might not be for most people. As an adult piano student I performed in a musical recital attended by mostly children. Sounds harmless, doesn’t it?

I have loved the piano most of my life. I have played since I was 25, in a self-taught manner. I did not read music or use conventional cords; I just sat down and played. A few years ago, I began lessons at a music studio. I had to start at the beginning but I enjoyed it quite a bit.

After about 10 months, my teacher announced that the studio was giving a recital. He asked if I would perform. I quickly declined. I could feel fear blossoming in my chest, coming on very quickly. What in the world was this? My distress was all out of proportion to the situation. I felt that the anxiety stood for something else; the recital represented something in my mind. I knew that the quickest way to come to terms with my fear of the recital, and whatever it represented in my mind, was to face that distress and play. So I told my teacher I would.

The recital was set for a Saturday. I was the only adult student performing. Wonderful! At my regular piano lesson the Monday before the recital my teacher gave me three

pieces to perform. They were very simple and well within my abilities.

Monday and Tuesday night I practiced. I was playing well. Maybe this was going to be OK. During practice on Wednesday night, I started to make a few mistakes. Thursday night I was making more errors. By Friday night, I could not play any of the music without tripping up. In addition to the mistakes, my playing sounded very stiff.

Panic took over. I knew I would humiliate myself. I played other pieces and did well; it was only the recital pieces that presented problems. Could I back out now? Could I just not show up? The fact that I *knew* that if I relaxed I would play better was no help whatsoever. Was I supposed to humiliate myself? Was that the lesson I needed to learn?

Driving to the recital, I felt fear, not just in my body, but in the entire interior of the car. Clammy sweat enveloped my skin, again. I thought, "This is so bad, why am I doing this." A familiar feeling indeed.

Sitting in the recital waiting for my turn, it took quite an effort to appear "normal". Fear took over. I envied the composure of the 6 and 7-year olds. The irony of this realization did not escape me.

The palms of my hands were sweating! Why? How could I play with sweaty palms? Why did I feel so much anxiety? It did not make sense. I was beyond reason now. I was incapable of analyzing or understanding my fear. All I knew for sure is that I WOULD walk to the piano and I WOULD play. I WOULD put one foot in front of the other and force myself to face this faintheartedness. I knew I would be glad later if I faced this fear, but I was not happy at that moment.

I sat at the piano and prepared to play thinking, "Whatever happens, however this turns out, it will be over soon and I can go home."

As soon as my fingers touched the keys a miracle happened. I felt no anxiety. I played the pieces without mistakes, better than I ever had. They sounded beautiful, or as beautiful as very simple pieces could sound.

I made my way back to my chair. I felt a huge surge of adrenaline and endorphins. It took supreme effort not to weep, dance or shout. Joy enveloped me.

Everyone must make their own decisions and find their own way in life. For me, facing fear and taking courageous action has had a very liberating effect. These emotions, however, are very individual. What I consider to be daring may not be an act of bravery for you, and vice versa. The most important thing is being fully aware of what you feel.

Denise Piersante received a BA in Communication from Michigan State University and has been a professional psychic on and off since the age of 21. She has been a member of the central Ohio metaphysical community on and off since 1992. Denise owns Full Moon Lunatics, an astrological consulting business. She has taught astrology classes for the former Creative Activities Program at The Ohio State University, Pearls of Wisdom bookstore, Rocks Unlimited, the Universal Light Expo and other psychic events and fairs.

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THE COLOR OF COURAGE

By Eva Starr

Courage is similar to a box of Crayola crayons – it comes in a variety of colors, sizes and shapes. We all start with a box of eight primary colors in the jumbo size. Next are the slim jims with a set of sweet sixteen. For the eclectic group, there is the neon box that lights up the sky. There are the glitter Crayolas to add sparkle to your world and finally the multi-colored box of 64, with colors such as periwinkle and magenta.

The latest color to be added to the Crayola box is courage. Yes, that's right. The inspiration for this color came from a courageous group of kids fighting cancer and other catastrophic illnesses at St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Crayola asked children all over the country, "If courage were a color what would it look like?" Over 120 different hues were viewed. Thousands voted and the color chosen to represent the spirit of courage is...drum roll please, scarlet!

For a substantial number of us, hearing the word courage makes us think of some of the world's greatest leaders who stood for courage. Names like John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Cleopatra, Catherine the Great and Jesus Christ come to mind. No doubt these men and women exhibited courage throughout their lifetimes, but let's explore the sometimes overlooked facets of courage.

It takes strength to stand guard and courage to let down your guard, showing your vulnerability and allowing someone to peek into your soul. Let us not use strength to conquer the world but courage to surrender. How often have you fought for something just to fight instead of surrendering and admitting that you don't, in fact, have all the answers? For myself, I've never blended into the woodwork or fit into society's mold or the parameters my family set for me. I stood out like a black sheep and I'm proud of it, for it takes strength to fit in and courage to stand out.

How about the courage it takes our children to walk away from the bully on the playground, or to withstand the ridi-

cule of their peers? What about the courage to say no to drugs or alcohol and to be the only one at the party who doesn't fit in? I can remember when my youngest daughter was about seven-years-old. We lived in the bottom of a double house in Lakewood. The picnic table in the backyard belonged to the couple living upstairs. At the time, she was playing on it and chipped a piece of the wood. It took all the courage in the world for that little girl to march upstairs and confess to the mishap. Chances are the couple would never have noticed, but I was teaching her at the time about being responsible for your actions.

I've spent quite a bit of time in the Social Services field working with abused teenagers, children and women suffering from domestic violence. One of the countless lessons I learned from my work with victims is that it takes strength to endure abuse, but far more courage to stop it. Let's recognize the tremendous courage it takes for thousands of people to speak up and stop the cycle of domestic violence. It takes courage to sit in a courtroom as a child, or an adult, look your abuser straight in the eye, and tell the truth.

It takes stamina to feel a friend's pain and courage to feel your own pain. How many of us hide behind our afflictions, stuffing them, refusing to go deep inside and sit with them, for however long that may be. Next time you want to run from your pain, or cover it up with yet another addiction, I challenge you to sit with your ache. Sit alone in the dark with your wounds, talk to them, feel the pain, allow it to speak to you...really listen to your hurt. I guarantee you will never be the same again. Now that my dear friend takes courage.

It takes strength to love, but how many of us have the courage to allow ourselves to be loved? Scary isn't it? How about looking in the mirror and speaking words of self-love out loud to yourself. In the coaching work that I do, I can attest that looking in the mirror and saying, "I love and accept you exactly as you are," takes more courage than the average Joe can muster. My clients tell me that for them, this one single exercise is the hardest thing they've ever done. So if you're one of the mirror graduates, give yourself a round of applause for the courage it took you to get to that far.

As some of you are aware, I left Cleveland last December and traveled 3000 miles across the country to San Diego. I left behind 52 years of my life, friends and family to follow my passion. I headed toward an uncertain future: no job, no place to live, no savings in the bank and with full understanding that I knew only one person in the whole state of California. I traveled alone with only the belongings that would fit in my automobile, hitting one ice storm after another.



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There were times I sat crying in a bathtub in a seedy motel room in a neighborhood that looked like something out of "Psycho," thinking I'm not going to make it. Following one's dream, throwing logic and reason out the window on the wings of a prayer takes courage. It takes strength to survive and courage to live. Ask yourself if you are merely surviving or do you have the courage to live the life you dare to live?

In your box of Crayola crayons what color is your courage? Go ahead and invent a new color of courage all your own...maybe someday they'll name a crayon after you.

Eva Starr's spiritual journey has taken her coast-to-coast studying the various schools of thought. Starr has recently relocated to San Diego, CA. Visit reachforthemoon.net for up-dates or to be added to her mailing list. Contact Eva Starr at evastarr24@yahoo.com 440-930-8865 for speaking engagements.

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EVERYDAY COURAGE PACKS A WALLOP

By Kelley Bell

Myanmar, located near Tibet and China, is the country formerly known as Burma. In Myanmar, the people live among the Pyu spirits. These spirits appear in nature and send messages through animals and plants.

Dr. Maung Gyi hails from Burma. Political unrest in his country forced him to move to the United States many years ago. He is a martial arts grandmaster, and has been my mentor for over twenty years. For this I am grateful, as our journey together has opened my eyes to many things.

As a woman engaged in martial arts, I have faced a great deal of misogynic ostracism. I have been outcast, belittled, criticized and subjected to overly rough treatment from people attempting to discourage my interest. The message was clear: Women do not belong here; this is a man's sport; nice girls don't fight; women should be submissive and soft.

The hints were usually subtle, but they were constant. They came from my family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and training partners. My name is Kelley, which means Warrior Woman, and comes from the root word Kali; the Hindu Warrior Goddess of Change. It is not in my nature to quit.

A big man with a black belt known as "Conan the Barbarian" tried to get me to quit by chiding the men in our class to laugh while he repeatedly sent me flying across a soccer field with full power, rear-leg-thrust kicks to the chest as I clutched a punching bag. That only toughened my resolve to get up and hold my ground.

When a cop in the club made nasty remarks implying that the only use for women in the group involved sex, I refused to condone it and demanded action from our leadership.

Withstanding this constant tsunami of negativity required a certain amount of backbone and courage. Not big heroic courage, but humble everyday courage. Heroic courage involves those epic moments in life that very few are ever called to answer, the type of courage found in books, songs and legends.

Everyday courage is a force just as powerful. It moves us forward and creates real and lasting change in the world. Everyday courage involves those small moments of quiet fortitude that never make headlines but shift people's hearts. It involves self-knowledge of your values and a willingness to speak up when others engage in wrong action. It means saying no to misogyny, racism and intolerance whenever and wherever we see it. It means not laughing when someone makes a racist joke at work. It means risking a job to ask why women do not earn equal pay for equal work. It

means speaking out against politicians or community leaders who engage in hate speech against minority groups. It means getting involved, being informed and voting for the values you believe in. It means using your influence and speaking out when you see something wrong, even if you are a single voice against a Goliath.

For me, such an act occurred one summer when I attended a four-day martial arts training camp in a secluded woodland campsite in Athens, Ohio. We were training to a bagpipe recording of the Scottish National Anthem, "Highland Cathedral." We listened to that song over and over every day while we drenched ourselves in sweat and perfected moves.

The camp required hard training, but I loved it, at least until guys making sexist remarks about women in the group interrupted. It was the usual crap, but it bothered me because it was so public and because the instructors condoned it, laughing along with them.

Spiritual and Musical Message

I boycotted the next few camps and informed the group leadership of my disappointment. The women work incredibly hard at those camps and have the bruises to prove it. We did not deserve to be outcasts. The study of martial arts hones the body, mind and spirit, and that should have nothing to do with exclusion based on gender, race or socioeconomic class. So I spoke out, but got an unsatisfactory official response.

The following summer I got a call from one of the instructors asking me to rejoin the group for an upcoming camp. Those who know me will tell you I am as stubborn as they come. I had dug in on this one, and was not about to relent. I did not believe any real changes would occur. But then something amazing happened.

While standing on my back deck, talking to the organization's representative on the phone, a complete stranger dressed in full Scottish garb stepped out onto my neighbor's deck with a set of bagpipes and began to play "Highland Cathedral!" I thought I was hallucinating.

At that same moment, a red tailed hawk circled over my head, screeching.

It was too surreal for words. Bagpipes? "Highland Cathedral?" A hawk? All converging in my suburban Ohio backyard, at this particular moment in time when the Bando club was calling to ask me to come back? No Way. Call it what you will. An omen, kismet, synchronicity or Divine intervention, this was a message not to be ignored. I was speechless. I accepted the offer, packed my bags and

marched off to camp with new fortitude.

On the third day, I suffered a broken toe. This, too, was a gift from the Divine. As a result, I did not join the group on the meditation hike the following morning. I stayed behind, alone with my dear Grandmaster Dr. Gyi. It was a rare opportunity to share my concerns. He listened intently. Then he spoke.

He talked of his country and the long struggle of his people to find independence. He talked about his life over seventy years, how dramatically the roles of women had changed. He talked about how, just thirty years ago, women were not admitted into the Bando membership. The "Bando Brotherhood" was exclusively men, but now it was changing.

Slowly, I began to understand. This world is not perfect and courage is not always a matter of great deeds. It is a matter of living in a state of right action each day. More often than not, courage comes in the form of many small drops of water rippling across life's pond. It is humble and small; it earns no parades. But it does bring change, and change is something we must measure in centuries, not decades. It is something that grows from the small acts of many, not just the big acts of one.

Dr. Gyi made it clear that, like my training, all progress comes slowly, one lesson, one idea, one experience at a time. My job is to get out there and do the very best that I can every day. To stand up for what I believe in and live with courage. To speak without hesitation, and to never, ever doubt that one small act of courage can make a big difference over the span of time.

As we sat by the smoldering morning campfire contemplating our exchange, a red tailed hawk called out and circled above us. Dr. Gyi smiled and pointed to the Pyu spirit.

"Do You See, Kaalee? Do You See," he said through his thick Burmese accent. "The Sprits are calling to you...Do You See?"

I nodded in awe. "Yes sir. I do see."

The American Bando Association has since elected its first woman president and the organization has many women black belts who are national champions and respected instructors. The American people elected Barack Obama as their first African American president – real change from the small collective acts of many, combined as the courage of One.

Kelley Bell-Wenzlaff is a former small business owner who ran for the Ohio Legislature in 2008. She is an active member of The League of Women Voters, the White House Project and she coordinates with The ODC Women's Caucus to educate voters. She was a contributing writer for The Huffington Post and co-author of the book; "MOM for The HOUSE, The Every Woman's guide to Housekeeping and Politics." She is a Black Belt Martial Arts instructor, specializing in womens self defense and personal courage. Her blog is at <http://kelleybell.blogspot.com>.

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Healing Begins in the Mind

Test Yourself And Be Prepared For New Discoveries

By Maggie Hardin

We have courage. We are present here today and in that truth resides warrior courage. We have chosen to participate in “What Comes Next” and we are positioned. It is palatable; you can taste it. We are in ripe and spectacular times, poised for greatness and peace. To say the least, it is change and it can be frightening.

Some wake up in fear, in thoughts of struggle. How can that fear be managed and clarification and resolution discovered? Even the enlightened in our midst would have to admit that on some mornings this is the first thought-set, the first flavor of energy for the day.

Thoughts have a head start on our awareness, literally. It takes awareness and great courage to move out of that mind-set into another one. Maybe we shift to appreciate the sweetness of gratitude, or maybe we go for a more subtle resignation to the tasks of the day. No matter our level of enlightenment, it takes a constant effort to manage the mind. It is our greatest task.

It has been said that the ego works and the soul plays, so I set about to play with the notions and perceptions I have about things. To really get to know myself, I needed to catch my thoughts and shift them if necessary.

A couple of my co-workers and I decided to engage in a little authentic self adventure.

We spent a six hour shift, using abrupt hard-sounding buzzers, to note when one of us said something negative. Being the positive and enlightened ladies we are, we were shocked to find out the truth. So many times we buzzed each other. At first it was fun and slightly competitive, but as the evening progressed it was mind blowing and not quite as entertaining. Actually, it was sad. There is much to shift, but how and where to begin?

I have lived in a lovely home for 10 years in an area of Columbus that has been seriously developed. The traffic has increased in size and volume. My stretch of the road has no signal light for a few blocks, so drivers gun it through there. If I am watching a movie, I have to shut my patio door. I can't sit in the sun in my backyard and talk on the phone or even appreciate the beauty of the perennials with out some aggravation.

Yes, aggravation, whoa...there it is... the place to start! OK, yes, I am aggravated. I will honor that feeling for a heartfelt moment. I love and accept myself. Yes, I would like to not be aggravated. I would like to be happy,

even blissful. How can I shift? I need a higher vibration and the highest vibration I know is love! I can feel my head perk up. I have already shifted a little.

On the Grid

If my energy field is entraining with the energy of my environment 100 percent of the time, then not only am I receiving the noise vibration from the road, I am also receiving a vibration from all the drivers. And they are receiving from me. We are in a soup of energies on the grid. Energy in the form of thought and feeling and movement is swirling, latching onto similar vibrations. Our roads and highways are like tainted blood veins through Mother Earth's body.

There are a lot of unchecked, downright mean behaviors going on in the cars on that road. We think we are getting away with doing and saying things because we are alone in the car. Our perception is that we are separated by glass and metal. We are bold and brave as we make our way to work, in a hurry and stressed out.

“God, will you just turn already?” “Damn lady, get on your own side of the road!”

“Idiot, you're gonna kill somebody!”

As an energy worker, I often see the marks put in my clients energy fields by someone who was mad at them. When I ask if they got into a fight or angered someone and they cannot remember an incident, I know it is a case of road rage. Maybe rage is too big a word for some of us, maybe it's aggravation or frustration; something considered normal in these stress-filled days of being on the road. But when energy is aimed and fired it always reaches its mark.

So be honest! We play both parts in the “road rage” drama. We have done the same action that pisses us off when someone does it to us. We are the other driver, we are that idiot. The cure for road rage is to say to yourself, “I've done that!”

Love Bombs

I also have been the perpetrator and its healer, so I challenged myself to a love game. I sat on my patio and threw out (emitted) love bombs to each and every car that went past my house. “Tag, you're it!”

I intended that the receiver spread that love as long as their car was on the road. I really enjoy this little game. It is easy and free. It heals me as love comes

through me and I believe it heals the drivers.

It is a scientific fact that we are on a quantum hologram, a shared field of energy where everything is connected and entangled. When you mistreat another, it is you who receives it! We are The One. So, what do you put in the soup?

Courage lies in the ability to love, to love yourself and everyone as your self. It may not be easy to love because we are all so fearful these days. Fear is the enemy, it stops us cold. That's why we need to make it a game so we can say, "I wonder what would happen at the office if I love bomb that person?"

We may not think we are potent enough to play this game. That is OK. Find the courage to love and accept yourself just as you are. That is more powerful than anything. It is so easy once you start and it will feed you.

Take your hand right now and touch your heart, feel the beautiful emanation of love and be open to love's full expression. Take up the only weapon that will work as a new warrior of spirit in these ripe and spectacular times. Take on love and feel the shift as you entrain with your environment.

I challenge you! This is a call to arms! I challenge you to find new and better ways to love all day long! We are in the best game of all existence right now. Have courage; let your soul play its finest. I love you. Tag, you're it!

Maggie Hardin, LMT, is a Reiki master teacher. She would love to hear all of your Ideas on how you play the Love Game. Her blog is Maggie's Natural Perceptions. <http://naturalperceptions.blogspot.com/>

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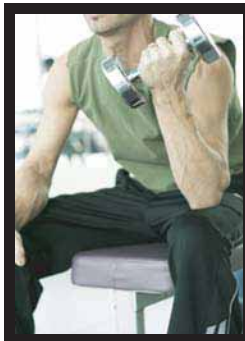
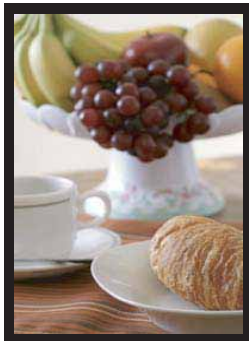
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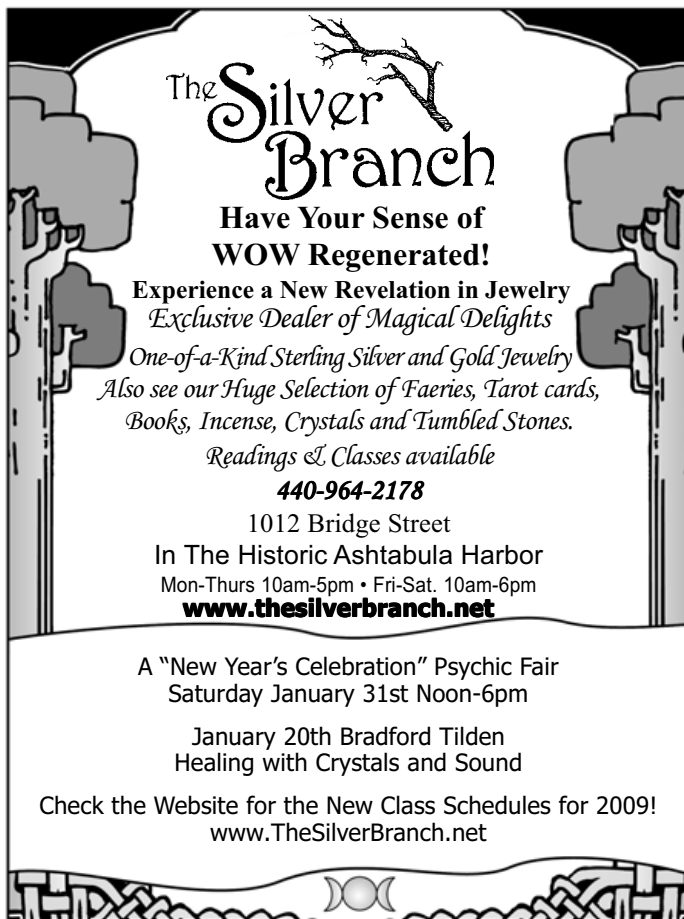
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Points to Ponder

Courage knows no status, it can emerge from the humble and the strong alike. But many of the world's great leaders have had something interesting and insightful to say about courage. It's worthwhile to reflect on some of their thoughts.

- "Yesterday I dared to struggle. Today I dare to win." *Bernadette Devlin*
- "Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount." *Clare Booth Luce*
- "Courage, it would seem, is nothing less than the power to overcome danger, misfortune, fear, injustice, while continuing to affirm inwardly that life with all its sorrows is good; that everything is meaningful even if in a sense beyond our understanding; and that there is always tomorrow." *Dorothy Thompson*
 - "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do." *Eleanor Roosevelt*
 - "Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties." *Erich Fromm*
 - "All serious daring starts from within." *Harriet Beecher Stowe*
 - "Without courage, wisdom bears no fruit." *Baltasar Gracian*
 - "We could never learn to be brave and patient if there were only joy in the world." *Helen Keller*
 - "Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish."
John Quincy Adams
- "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again".
Maya Angelou
- "To dare is to lose one's footing momentarily. To not dare is to lose oneself." *Soren Kierkegaard*
- "Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm." *Winston Churchill*



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HEALTH & NUTRITION

FINANCIAL MELTDOWN: LESSONS IN CREATING COURAGE

By **Janee Kuta-Iliano**

Courage: "The quality of mind that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, etc., without fear; bravery."

Our economy is in crisis and our shared panic is creating a global emergency. These days, I find myself caught in conversations about our economic situation and all the financial hardships we are sure to face. Much of the advice encourages us to watch out and beware of the tough times ahead. Many are visibly scared about what appears to be happening. We hear stories and are seeing friends being laid off from work and the news continues to forecast gloom and doom. The paranoia feels like white noise aggravating the air.

It is clear that the quality of our minds can help us recover from these difficult times. If we continue to believe in what is predicted, however, the collective thought will surely overcome us and our future will be exactly as we fear.

We can either choose to believe that the worst is ahead, that our future is bleak and that we better hang on to what we have. Or we can choose to have faith, faith that what is happening is exactly what we need as a nation, as a society and as a planet. Faith that it's all happening in order to learn a way in which we can live more harmoniously with one another. Do we have the courage to overcome our fears and help bring peace to each other during such unsettling times?

Do we want to believe that we have lost control over our lives or do we want to affirm that we will be okay and that we will prosper more than before? Thoughts are things. What we spend most of our time thinking and talking about becomes our reality.

Living in fear is the opposite of living in love. If we have fear than we cannot love, which makes us lose our infinite power. We roll over dead to life's circumstances instead of feeling driven to take action. Everything is in its perfect and direct opposite.

Our lives are all about choices. We have a choice in everything we do and in how we feel. The Bible says that it is sinful (to have missed the mark) to fear and we are asked to not allow evil thoughts to sink in to create a false sense of self. A good friend said that we are on, "God's economy,"

and that we should not involve ourselves with earthly desires and fears. Let us be accountable to the light and not sow in dead works.

So let us not join and participate in conversations that fuel this combined fear of the unknown. That undoubtedly will attract more of the same. Do we have the courage to remain hopeful and positive? Can all of us keep doing what we do best while living in thanks despite the challenges? "All the days of the desponding and afflicted are made evil by anxious thoughts but he who has a glad heart has a continual feast regardless of circumstances." (Prov 15:15) Constant gratitude can strengthen our days to remain steadfast to our work and purpose.

Lessons indeed need to be learned and everything does happen for a reason, but we really have a choice in how we deal with it. When difficulties arise, when times are hard financially, let us have the courage to believe that we are not our cars, our fancy clothes, our retirement funds or our oversized and overstuffed homes. Let us remember where we came from. Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet they are constantly provided for. Are we not worth much more than birds? Let us remember why we are here and who we really are at our core.

If we let go of what we think should be happening and ride this wave with the right mindset, having constant faith and trust, we will overcome what is happening to us. Let us have the courage to persevere through our toughest times. The choice is ours to make.

Janee Kuta-Iliano is the owner of ALiVE ONE, a coaching business that focuses on teaching others the benefits of internal cleansing and purification of the body. She is a holistic health educator, offering Internal Cleansing & Detoxification Programs, Juice Plus+ Nutritional Products and instruction on Raw & Living Foods Classes. Visit her Web site at www.aliveone.net. For more information contact Janee at (440) 478-9802 or janee@aliveone.net

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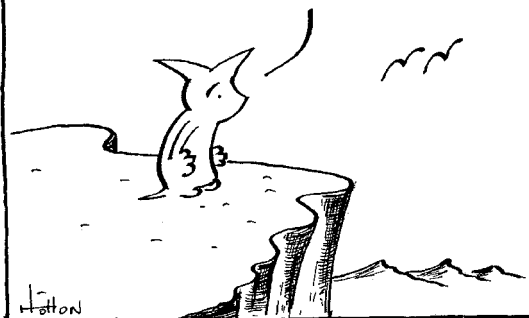
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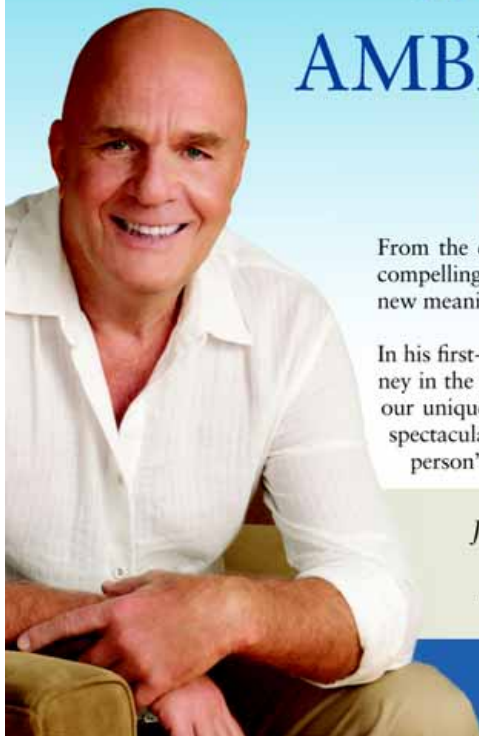
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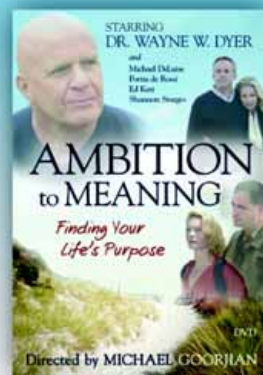
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THE YOGA PAGES



The Courage Of Transformational Spirituality

By Roger Sams

*We have not come here to take prisoners
Or to confine our wondrous spirits,
But to experience ever and ever more deeply
Our divine courage, freedom
and Light! – Hafiz*

We are living in times of exciting and dramatic change. As one age dies and another is being born, humanity is called to leave behind old ways of being and move toward a new and bold embodiment of God consciousness. This requires tremendous courage as we consciously choose death to our old lives and birth ourselves anew.

I was raised in an evangelical Christian home. I had my first born again experience as a youth when a fiery sermon moved me deeply and I felt the presence of God. I responded, largely out of fear of going to hell, and found myself on my knees at the altar near the end of an emotional night at church. What differentiates the transformational spiritual path that I now walk from the evangelical path of my heritage is that in my youth I believed that this conversion experience was a one-time choice. What I now experience as truth is that I am constantly being invited to be born again. Every day is an opportunity to birth my next best version of myself. It is not about a single conversion experience, but rather a lifestyle that embraces spiritual evolution and recognizes that each day is an opportunity to die to old beliefs and old ways of being in order to be born again into the light of God's love.

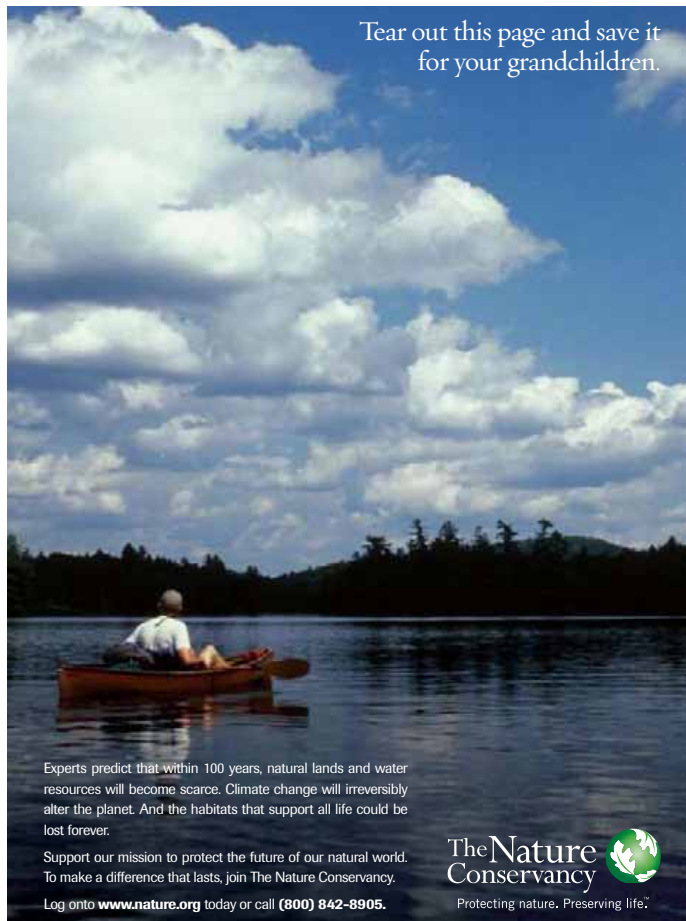
In the summer of 2004 I was camping alone in the mountains of West Virginia and I clearly saw my own evolu-

tionary journey. A profound sense of gratitude for my often challenging pathway back to God moved me to write a poem of gratitude for medication that I was taking due to chronic health issues.

Nightly Ritual.
Deadly Poisons.
Toxic Sacraments appeasing Kali's messengers,
As She challenges me
to Rebirth
Her Sweet Decapitation
Insisting that I
must be born again,
again
this
day.


Jesus invites us to be born again. The Hindu goddess Kali is much less gentle. She decapitates. Those who have taken more than a few steps on the path of transformation recognize that the choice to grow is usually made because the pain and struggle of life becomes unbearable and we find the courage to choose something better. It is darkness that births light. It is our woundedness that invites healing.

Tear out this page and save it
for your grandchildren.



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Let your woundedness
break
your
heart,
my dear sweet child.

Your tears
will
water
starving lifefields.

Grieve the losses,
allowing decay to nourish
Divine soulseeds within.

Decapitate the fantasy
that holds you in bondage to the
false god of
not good enough.

Your next best self has already been conceived.

Grace dance now!
Birth your
Brilliant,
Brilliant
Light.

I recognize how challenging it is to make the choice to let go of the security of the story about ourselves and embrace unknown possibilities. We must let go of old ways of being and the security of thinking that we know who we are in order to allow the Godforce to flow through us and remind us that we are much bigger than our history and the

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wounds that subconsciously control us. I consistently find that when people stand at the precipice of possibility the presence of fear is nearly overwhelming. That is when many seekers pull back from the spiritual cliff and run toward the security of past wounds and the patterns of behavior that they birthed. That is when courage is required. In the midst of all that fear our Higher Self invites us to muster up the courage to jump into the fertile void. There the Godforce awaits to remind us who we really are, eternal beings of light that have chosen to incarnate at this point in time to participate in the evolution of human consciousness.

If you look around you with open eyes and hearts, you'll recognize that much of humanity is standing at the edge of that cliff of possibility. Things are so dark that we're mustering up the courage to jump as a collective. The choices that we've made in the past have created a world that we no longer find acceptable. We're destroying the earth, each other and ourselves. There's a higher choice.

As a nation we've made a courageous choice. America moved itself deeply and in November made a choice for transformation. It is the darkness of the world and our culture that birthed within us the courage to break all of our cultural rules and elect a man of color with a funny name and a bold point of view as our next president. Because of the darkness we've been living we found the courage to choose change and the whole world celebrated our courageous choice.

The choice is an individual choice, but as more and more individuals choose to spiritually wake up it becomes a collective choice. That collective choice births a new kind of community as circles of spiritual transformation send ripples

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of change energy out into the world. These spiritual communities can be found throughout our region and the world. If your heart has been summoning up the courage to jump I encourage you to seek out others who are also in the process of birthing themselves anew. Join hands with other courageous souls and jump. Heaven on earth is waiting for you!

I am dancing
on the edge of miracle.
The precipice of possibility
beckons me to jump.
Caution and abandon pas de deux.
Light and dark
sumo wrestle
the sinews of my flesh.
Push me God!
The void is unavoidable.

Roger Sams is the founder of Dancing Paradox: Transformation Through the Arts. He travels throughout the U.S. leading workshops for music and movement educators and retreats for those interested in touching God through the arts. Roger is the Spiritual Director of the Sacred Arts Holistic Center, on Cleveland's near west side, where he leads ongoing classes and drop-in events that support spiritual evolution through the arts. The community gathers together every Sunday morning at 11:00 for Dance Church. Contact Roger at rogersams@mac.com or visit www.SacredArtsHealingCenter.com.

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Please keep each listing to 35 words or less.

Call 440-223-1392 for more details.

PLANETARY PATHWAYS

By Eva Starr

January: New Moon in Aquarius January 26th 2:35am/Full Moon in Cancer January 10th 10:27pm

February: New Moon in Pisces February 24th 8:35pm/Full Moon in Leo February 9th 9:45am

Mercury Retrograde: Jan 11th 8:44am 7° Aquarius ~ Jan 31st 11:11pm 21° Capricorn

ARIES

January – Ram is always in a hurry, speed, speed, speed...start the New Year off like the tortoise, *slow it down*...there is no need to hurry, much like the tortoise who carries its home on its back...there is nothing to seek this month...the stars are asking you to stay cool, calm and centered...the essence is at ease...only then will you win the race

February – Getting in tune and aligned last month did you some good...this month *the world is your oyster*...Venus has showed up at your door wearing red, the Ram's favorite color...Cupid's arrow is pointing in the Ram's direction this Valentine's Day...and that's not all...infinite possibilities abound across the board for the Ram, take heed

TAURUS

January – The Bull likes too keep things as they are...the Universe is shaking up that pen of yours and asking you to *let go* this New Year, that's right it's time to allow the sadness, but then *release and let go*, new dimensions are opening up for you, in order to have your cup runneth over you need to empty it first, change is the only constant

February – The Universe recognizes your existence, the Bull is not separate from all that is, separateness in an illusion...take time this month to gaze at this vast Universe of ours, the Stars, the Sun, and the Moon...*know that you have a place here*, and without you there would be a void, appreciate your place on Planet Earth...love is all around you

GEMINI

January – It's time for the Twins to *fly out of it's cage* this New Year, those bars are disappearing, the door was never locked, take flight, spread your wings, this is a time for Gemini to experience the true meaning of freedom, the sky is yours, the Universe is opening up to you this month, the only limits are the ones you place on yourself

February – All that freedom did you good, take time this month, to come back down to earth just a wee bit, *spread the love* down here on the ground...after all the Twins are the communicators of the Zodiac...and this is the time to shout your message to the world, now that Mercury's gone, direct ears will be open, no more miscommunication, *speak*

CANCER

January – Start the New Year off, Crab, realizing that *you are the masterpiece*, God never gives birth to anything less than a masterpiece...drop the idea of doing, or becoming a certain thing or someone...recognize what Michelangelo did when he sculpted the statue David, the beauty was already in the stone, he just chiseled away the imperfections

February – Why are you still holding on Crab, release those pincers once and for all...I know the Crab is all about nostalgia and the past, but there comes a time to *release your grip*, whatever is meant to be yours will not pass you by, life is like a boomerang send it out flying and it will come back...give up control, the Universe is smarter than you

LEO

January – OK Lion it's time to free-fall through that Jungle of yours, the Planets have lined up to catch you, *TRUST is the operative word* for you the start of the New Year, bungee jump without a cord, when you trust, something immense opens up, your life becomes full of God...open yourself to the adventure of not knowing

February – You've got your work cut out for you Leo, this month the Stars are asking you to *integrate within yourself*, bring the Yin and Yang together as two parts of one whole...the lion must balance the left and the right brain, the meeting of Plato and Aristotle, to effectively rule your Jungle, you've got the planetary assistance go for it

VIRGO

January – Valentine's Day comes a month early for the Virgo, yes love is in the air, love on a grander scale for Virgo, you have the capability of transcending physical love into compassionate love into Universal love, *be open to giving* for the sheer joy of it, take this into your meditation this month and our heart will open up more than you can imagine

February – The Stars are guiding you this month Virgo, you need to open you eyes and ears because sometimes it speaks in a whisper, you are being guided, there is no need to look for the light or the door, it is there inside of you, *listen to that still small voice* and follow where it leads you, trust it to take you exactly where you need to go

LIBRA

January – Libra's goal the start of the New Year is to *balance itself* as it gently steps across the stones in a rapidly flowing river, the good news, balance is your nature, your challenge is to stay in the moment, just be, not do, release ambition for ambition moves you into the future, your goal is to just see and enter the gate the Stars have opened

February – The Celestial skies are giving you the opportunity this month Libra to enjoy your aloneness, *aloneness is the presence of oneself*, a positive overflowing presence, this presence can fill the entire Universe, and it is God's gift to you this month of hearts and flowers, embrace your own presence, enjoy your solitude, become one with all

SCORPIO

January – The Scorpion's task as it starts out the New Year is giving up control and *going with the flow*...the planetary energies will support you if you allow them, every moment you have a choice to flow with the currents of life or try to swim upstream, your challenge is to relax and trust the river of life and its Divine Plan to carry you

February – The Scorpion is reminded during this month of love to *be a participant in the dance of life*, notice life around you, pay attention to the Sun rising and the fullness of the Moon, take time out to smell the roses, join in the world around you, don't be a spectator, life is all around you and you have the opportunity to be a part of it, the Stars say join in

SAGITTARIUS

January – The New Year starts off with *the sounds of silence* for the Centaur, the Celestial Stars are shining brightly asking you to notice the stillness of the night, the heavens, now is a precious time to delve deep within yourself searching for depth, peace and understanding...the answers lie within, now is the time to come home to yourself

February – The Planets have given you the opportunity this month to stop the tape, the gate was never locked, you've



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placed yourself in a self-imposed prison and it's time to come out, through meditation you can *release the past*, let go of the old pain, open the unlocked gate and come out into the world and enter that which you most long to become

CAPRICORN

January – The Goat takes on a rebel stance in the New Year as Mars, the Warrior Planet enters your sign along with the Sun...you will own that mountain this month as you come alive with the realization of your own true nature and your *courageous spirit*, the Goat is not afraid to speak their enlightened truth, stepping out of conformity

February – Mercury spends some time in Capricorn this month, the Goat may be hard pressed in *making decisions* this Valentine's, especially in matters of the heart, when in doubt do without...use that Capricornian practicality of yours and weigh everything out, your mind will be working overtime so take advantage of those extra brain cells

AQUARIUS

January – Congratulations are in order Aquarius, Jupiter; *the Santa Claus of the Zodiac* has moved into your sign and will be around for the next year. You have something to celebrate this New Year, take advantage of opportunities, the Chinese New Year & the New Moon are also in your sign, the only glitch is Mercury goes Retrograde in Aquarius

February – The Sun and Mars move into Aquarius this Valentine's month...but you're stuck in the duality of the mind and indecisiveness...*you're stuck between a rock & a hard place*, make yourself a list of pros & cons and then decide, if that doesn't work throw everything out the window and surrender to the Divine and let the Heavens take over

PISCES

January – Start the New Year off experiencing the moment, be in communion with whomever you are with, Lady Venus takes a swim in the Fish's pond, be one with the trees, the snow, the Stars are giving you the opportunity to become one with your environment, the Fish spends too much time swimming around, *be still in your pond*

February – The New Moon is in Pisces this month, new beginnings for the Fish, watch your reflection in that Fish pond...because *what you see in your world is a projection* of what lives in your pond. If you see it on the screen it came from the back of the Fish mind, similar to the projector in the cinema...it's your movie, make it count

Eva Starr's love for Astrology, inherent in her since childhood, is still a growing passion today. Imagine finding the perfect vacation spot...NEW relocations charts available, visit her Web site www.reachforthemoon.net. Compatibility charts, Solar Returns, & monthly transits contact evastarr24@yahoo.com. phone consultations now available (440) 930-8865.

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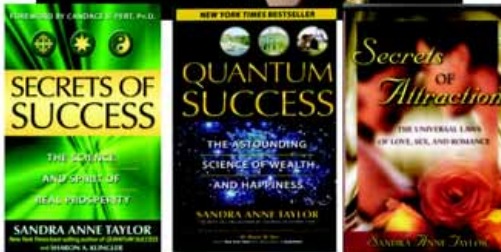
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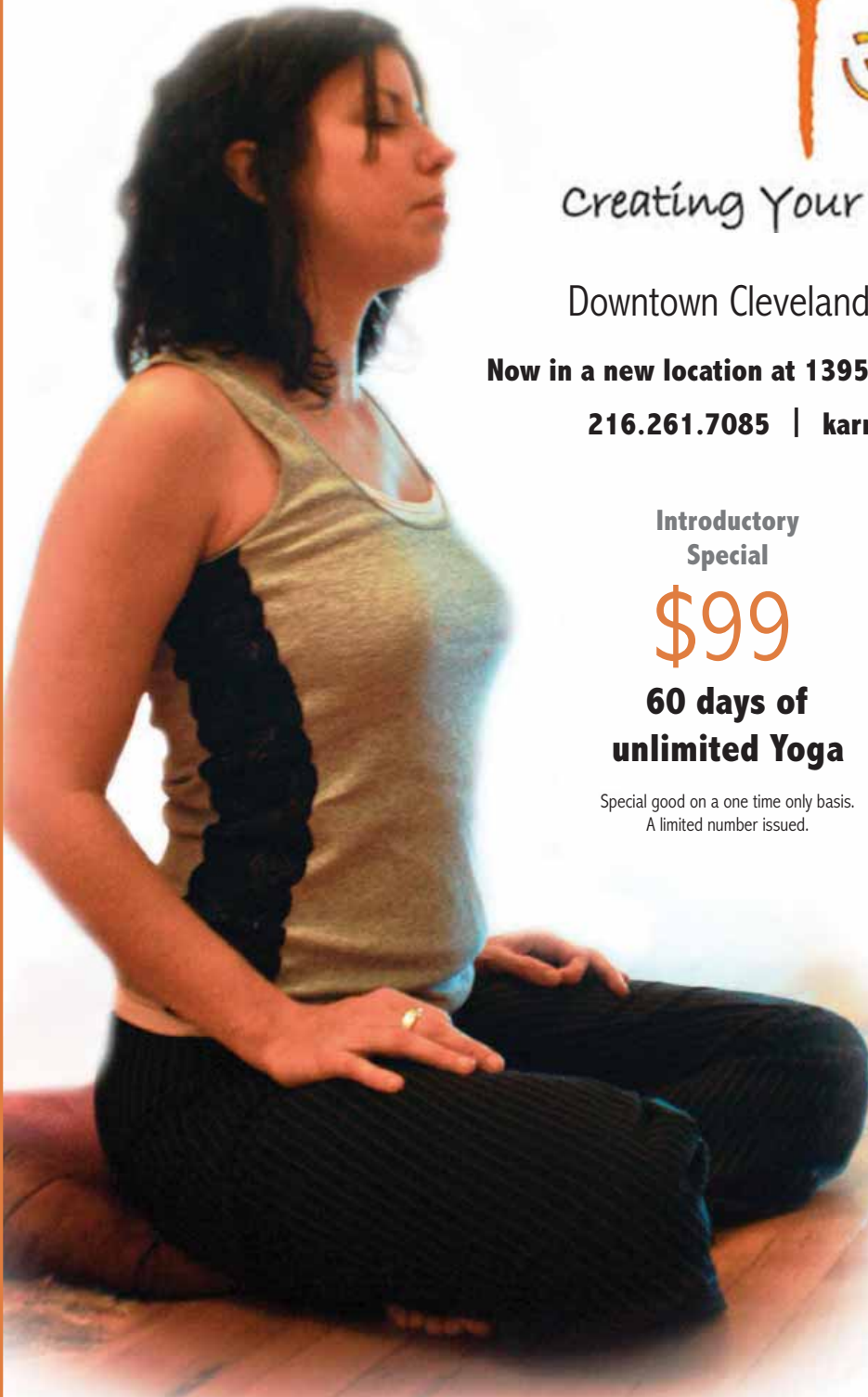
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